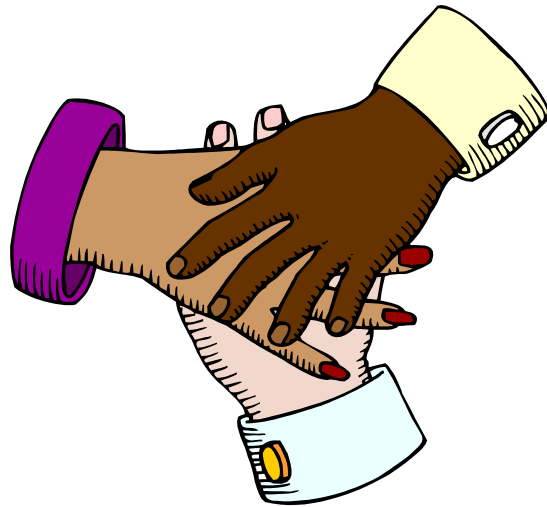


Life Opportunities, Inc.



**TEAM YOUTH INITIATIVE
PROJECT SUMMARY**

Opportunities for positive living with all the comforts of home

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW AND MISSION:

Life Opportunities, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization based in Browns Mills, New Jersey. The organization incorporated in January of 2003 and received its non-profit status under IRS statute 501©3 during that same year. Our vision is to create an eighteen month transitional housing and support services program that assists youth and young adults, ages 16-21, transitioning out of the foster care and juvenile justice systems. Our mission is to provide the support and resources necessary to assist this specific target population to successfully transition into mainstream society to lead productive lives. Our current timeline to make this vision a reality is set for June of 2012.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Against the backdrop of the normal challenges of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, today's youth face new complex challenges and obstacles that were not consideration for prior generations. High rates of family mobility, lack of social networks in neighborhoods, and larger and more diverse school settings, have changed the landscape of family and community life for this generation. As a result communities nationwide are embracing efforts to promote the healthy growth and development of youth by providing them with the supports and experiences necessary to successfully transition to adulthood. Pressure to raise student achievement, the need for safe and enriching environments for youth during out-of-school time, a focus on building the skills and competencies of young people, and an emphasis on preventing risky behaviors have all fueled the demand for quality youth programs.

Currently, more than 4000 youth mentoring organizations nationwide connect youth to supportive, caring individuals who help provide guidance and stability to youth as they face adolescence. Despite the heightened demand and the apparent benefits of quality, long term mentoring programs, only 2.5 million of the 17.6 million youth in special need of mentors have one. In Burlington County there is a limited number of youth mentoring programs, and for those that do exist, their target population are those at-risk youth that are in the DYFS or juvenile justice systems. Unfortunately, this demographic focus minimizes the mentoring opportunities for those youth in Burlington County who need a helping hand to keep them from behaviors, activities, and peer pressures that would put them in that at-risk category.

PLAN OF ACTION:

The Team Youth Initiative is being implemented to safeguard our youth and to provide them with opportunities that will enable them to avoid those behaviors and negative influence that would put them at-risk. The proposed program will serve youth ages 14 to 19 living in Burlington County and the surrounding areas. It is designed to impact the following 1) any negative self-images that are perpetuated by the social and cultural landscapes that dominate the lives of many of our youth 2) the under exposure of our youth to a world that extends beyond the neighborhood or the block 3) a mindset that facilitates a disengagement among our youth when it comes to making healthy and constructive life choices. These outcomes will be facilitated through a programmatic design that includes:

- **Mentoring** – Positive interaction between the youth and their adult advisors. Through this interaction the youth will become aware of the importance of positive self-esteem., which in turn allows each of them to develop into their full potential, capable of making informed, responsible decisions as involved members of our community.
- **Capacity Building and Skill Development** – Activities that will assist the youth in retaining skills and resources that will strengthen and improve their personal and collective ability to increase their effectiveness as students and as leaders in their respective communities and neighborhoods. Such activities will include tutoring, study skills training, financial literacy training, instruction leading to the completion of secondary school that includes dropout prevention strategies
- **Character Development** – A deliberate attempt to move an agenda that instills basic values and morals in the youth participants. Interwoven in all aspects of our programmatic are the principles of honesty, respect, responsibility, empathy, and civic duty.
- **Community Service** – During the period of matriculation, the youth will be responsible for developing and implementing a community service project. The objective is for the youth to see that it is their responsibility and civic duty to take a proactive role in making their community a better place to live.
- **Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity** – As a result of the ethnic diversity that exist in Burlington County, the youth participants will be encouraged to develop a sensitivity and understanding of other ethnic groups without assigning values, i.e., better or worse.

The Team Youth Initiative is scheduled to begin in March of 2010 and end in June. At the end of that period we will evaluate the pilot sessions during the months of July and August to analyze and fine tune project goals, objectives and outcomes. We will resume the youth initiative in September 2010 to June 2011. The program will meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month, from 6pm to 8pm.

PROJECT GOALS:

1. The successful development of a sustainable youth mentoring program in the Burlington County Area
2. To successfully provided opportunities for the youth participants to gain the necessary skills and personal resources that will guide them to make healthy life choices

PROJECT OUTCOME OBJECTIVES:

1. Successful recruitment of 15-30 youth ages 14 to 19 years old to participate in the Team Mentoring Program
2. Full participation of initiative participants in bi-weekly workshops and mentoring sessions
3. 50% of the participants retaining skills and resources that will strengthen and improve their personal and collective ability to increase their effectiveness as students and leaders in their respective communities and neighborhoods
4. That Life Opportunities Inc., is able to secure the necessary funding to sponsor those youth who successfully complete the program as Youth Ambassadors from Burlington County at the next session of the United Nations Youth Assemble that will be held in August of 2010

MANAGEMENT PLAN:

Through the development of “*Strategic Partnership*”, with other community-based organization, local government, institution and local commerce; “*Resource Sharing*” with local institutions and local commerce, and “*Volunteerism*” among concern professionals and concerned citizens; we will generate the financial and staffing resources needed to facilitate this initiative.

BUDGET:

The estimated budget for this project is \$30,000.00. Funding will be facilitated via grants, charitable contributions and in-kind services.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Awarded \$10,000.00 in grant funding through the New Jersey Office of Faith Based Initiatives for organizational infrastructure development
- Currently in the application process with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to generate funding for land acquisition and property renovation
- Currently researching foundations, philanthropic organizations, non-profit entities, corporate donors and State and Federal agencies to facilitate the financial and technical resources necessary to facilitate the long-term sustainability of Life Opportunities, Inc.
- Working with organizational development consultant to develop an on-going board training curriculum to insure that the members of the Life Opportunities, Inc. Board of Directors have the capacity and resources necessary to facilitate the organizational mission

THE ORGANIZATION:

Board Members:

Officers

Ethel Clagg, President

Cloette Davis, Secretary

Inez Coleman, Treasurer

Trustees

Judy Jiles

Rosemary Reed

Crystal Alexander

Steve Fusco

Patricia Urso

Vernette Richburg

Advisory Committee

Carl F. Hunter II, M.Div. – S.T.A.R.S. CDC